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ABSTRACT

In 1981, at the suggestion of the college president, Metro Community College (MCC) instituted a College Advisory System (CAS) to replace its cumbersome structure of 17 standing committees and numerous ad hoc committees. CAS is a voluntary, action-oriented, entirely open system, allowing for input from all sectors of the college community. It is not controlled by the administration, but rather is composed of a steering panel and four subcommittees for business and personnel matters, the college's future, student services, and teaching and curriculum. All constituencies (i.e., faculty; students; and administrative, professional, and classified staff) of the college are represented on the appropriate committees. The steering panel meets once a month to review, discuss, and determine appropriate action for proposals received during the month. Proposals are submitted on simple forms requiring the initiator to state his/her idea, concern, etc.; indicate what brought about the request; suggest a solution; and provide supporting materials. Proposals that affect many individuals and/or areas are channeled to one or more of the four committees for further discussion, and then forwarded to the appropriate vice president for input and implementation. "Housekeeping" proposals on clear-cut issues are submitted directly to an administrator. Efforts are made to complete all action on submitted proposals within 20 working days. As an advisory system, CAS can make recommendations for change, but it remains the task of management to make the final decision and implement the idea. The college community is kept informed of proposals submitted to CAS through a weekly publication. The keys to CAS's success are credibility, communication, and commitment. (UCM)

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Presented by
Roberta J. McBride and Susan Perina

at the
National Conference on Teaching Excellence
May 19, 1987 -- Austin, Texas

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Metro Community College is, as community colleges go, a rather young college. We were created in 1974 by the Nebraska legislature, when it divided the state into six areas, each to be served by a community college.

Metro is a three-campus institution, situated in Omaha in the most densely populated area of the state. We serve four counties, which encompass both rural and urban areas. Metro serves over 20,000 students annually in our credit and non-credit programs. We are guided by an elected board of governors and funded through tuition, property taxes, and state funds.

The College Advisory System (or CAS) was begun in 1981 at the suggestion of the College President, Dr. J. Richard Gilliland. When Dr. Gilliland arrived at Metro in 1980, he discovered a cumbersome committee structure (actually, part of the problem was that there was no structure) of 17 committees, as well as many ad hoc committees. We at the College have learned well after seven years that Dr. Gilliland is not a traditionalist. So when he decided to clean up the committee structure, he searched for ideas from several different sources, and found a similar system at an Eastern community college.

I have a firm belief that the world is run by Murphy's Laws. Sue and I will be using several to illustrate some points--I think you'll agree with this Law. That is, you will if you've ever served on a committee. (Old and Kahn's Law transparency--See Appendix A)

Sue will be pointing up some differences between this system and other types, but before she starts, let me tell you one of them. When CAS was formed, effort was taken to be sure all constituencies of the College were represented on the appropriate committees: faculty, students, administrative, professional, and classified staff.

We feel this has been a factor in our success. In one committee the perspectives on an issue may range from a clerk's viewpoint to the student who stands on the other side of the counter. With interaction among all categories of staff, the administrator may get a new appreciation for the telephone registration system as seen through the eyes of the computer input staff member.

Also, when the committees are reorganized each year, care is taken to balance the committees by campus, sex, race, and still maintain a mixture of new and continuing members. All of this has not been terribly easy to do, particularly as membership is voluntary.

Sue will tell you a little bit about each committee, its focus, intent, and structure.

CAS is a voluntary, action oriented structure composed of a steering panel and subcommittees encompassing four broad areas. These include: the Committees on Business and Personnel Matters, College's Future, Student Services, and Teaching and Curriculum. I am currently chairperson of the Teaching and Curriculum Committee.

The Steering Panel is the main component of CAS and acts as its control. Each committee consists of 10 or 11 members representing a mix of the total college population. For example, the Steering Panel consists of 2 administrators, 2 faculty, 2 classified staff, 1 support staff, and the 4 committee chairpersons for a total of 11 members. This blending of the college community provides CAS with a wide range of diversity. It has been my experience that this has provided us with a variety of viewpoints. It has also given committee members insight into the workings of various college units which makes for better understanding and an appreciation of each other. This in turn creates unity and a sense of belonging to a team. We view this diversity of membership as being one of CAS's unique features.

(Jay's First Law of Leadership transparency--See Appendix B) Jay's first law of leadership can be applied to CAS. CAS by its nature is a change agent and has affected some very creative and innovative changes within our work environment. The main vehicle of CAS is the Proposal, which is submitted to the Steering Panel. Bobbi, as Steering Panel Chairperson, monitors each proposal from the time of its receipt. She will discuss this further later in the presentation.

The Steering Panel meets once a month to review, discuss, and determine appropriate action for new proposals received during the month. Proposals that affect many individuals and/or areas are channeled to one or more of the four committees for further discussion. If a proposal appears to be "clear cut" in nature, the proposal is referred directly to the appropriate vice president for his/her review and reaction. Bobbi, as Chair, presents each new proposal to the Steering

Panel Committee for review. Discussion usually lasts from three to ten minutes per proposal. CAS is structured to keep proposals flowing as rapidly as possible. We strive for a response within 20 working days after a proposal has been discussed by Steering Panel and referred for action. This calls for smooth orchestration on the part of all committee members. It is of utmost importance that the Steering Panel Chair be wisely chosen, as this person must keep all functions of CAS operating in order for the system to work.

Usually the four committees meet the following week. Committee chairs are charged with providing copies of an agenda and any new proposals received to their respective committee members in advance of the meeting. This also provides committee chairs with time to do minimal research regarding proposals, solicit advice from key persons, and get clarification from proposer, if needed. When the meeting is held, members will be ready to respond. As our name denotes, CAS is advisory in scope. It is the responsibility of all committees to review, react, recommend and refer proposals, with implementation determined and provided by the vice presidents, president, and possibly the Board of Governors.

CAS has been very well received by our staff. Unlike many of your more traditional forms of college senates, CAS airs a wide range of topics with few, if any, limitations. CAS provides all students and staff an opportunity to better their work and/or learning environment. Metro staff and students have found CAS to be an effective "sounding board."

Their proposals will receive committee attention and will be acted upon in an expedient manner. Even if the proposal is denied, action has been received. CAS can be referred to as a "suggestion box" that works.

It is very easy to get your idea "on the agenda." You only need to secure a proposal form, which are available at strategic locations on all campuses. Complete the form and give it to a CAS member or send it directly to the Steering Panel Chair. (CAS Propsal Form transparency--See Appendix C) The form is very simple and uncomplicated. It takes very little time to complete--State your idea, concern, etc., what brought about the request; suggested solution and supporting materials.

Bobbi will give you examples of other CAS projects as well as explain the proposal flow.

Each committee has the option of, as the handbook states, "To review those matters that fall clearly within the committee's purview."

And there have been instances of CAS being quite busy with projects other than proposals. In 1982, the Steering Panel was the main steering body for a major long-range planning project. Different members of the committee served in various capacities, with the project culminating in a self-study for an accreditation visit. After the self-study was written by a campus office, the CAS Steering Panel then reviewed the document and added comments that went to the accreditation team unedited. All of this contributed to Metro's being awarded a ten-year accreditation.

This project and process points up two fundamental differences about the CAS: (1) It is an entirely open system, allowing for input of ideas from all aspects of the College community, and (2) It is not controlled by the administration. I personally think it takes a mighty secure and

free-thinking administration to leave themselves wide open to suggestions and possible criticism by employees. This is probably one reason why it won't work just any where.

The proposal is really the heart of CAS, because big projects like long-range planning don't happen weekly. As Sue mentioned the first step is to get the proposal form into the hands of the proposer. We include a proposal sheet in an issue of our weekly newsletter a couple of times a year, beginning in the fall. We make certain that proposal forms are in every admissions office, campus library and give plenty to each chairperson. When someone submits a proposal, they can give it to a committee member or chairperson or send it directly to me as chair of the steering panel. They all end up in my hands for distribution at Steering Panel meetings.

One of the changes the Steering Panel made a couple of years ago in the system concerned who the proposal was actually sent to. We used to send it directly to the office that had direct control of the issue. For example, proposals involving registration procedures used to go to the Director of Admissions, Records, and Registration. Now, we send it directly to the appropriate Vice President, who then can task individuals with compiling a response.

The reason for change? (Rule of Defactualization transparency--See Appendix D) Actually, this can be the problem, but the real reason is simply to increase awareness and communication within the College ranks...essential to the process.

Now, what happens to a proposal in the system? (Flow Chart transparency--See Appendix E)

I mentioned Steering Panel action, which is the first step taken by the CAS body. The panel decides if this is most appropriately addressed by one of the subcommittees or an administrator. There are no formal

guidelines, but a general rule of thumb is that "housekeeping" proposals--physical changes, clear-cut issues--are submitted directly to an administrator. Policy changes and student service issues will many times be sent to a committee for discussion. If the committee decides the proposal has merit, it then sends it to the appropriate vice president for input and implementation, if warranted.

Every effort is taken to complete action on a proposal within 20 working days. We realize and allow for the complexity of proposals, and although the 20-day deadline is not waived, we do not expect miracles. By the same token, some have occurred; we have had a complex proposal responded to within that time frame. Responsiveness is another key factor, because if proposals get no response, the system dies. It's appropriate to emphasize again here that CAS is an ADVISORY system. We can recommend changes, but it remains the task of management to make the decision and implement the idea.

Sue will explain how the college community is kept informed regarding the status of proposals.

(Proposal Updates transparency--See Appendix F) The college community is kept informed of proposals submitted to CAS through our in-house weekly publication, the Inside Story. This responsibility, as well as the Proposal Update, is handled by the Steering Panel Vice Chairperson monthly. As you can see, proposals listed on this update range from the simple to complex.

Bobbi will now define her duties as Steering Panel Chair.

I have been chairperson of the Steering Panel for two years. Before that, I served on the Steering Panel as Vice-Chair (although that is not a prerequisite), and before that on the Teaching and Curriculum committee. This current position has been the most challenging and

therefore most rewarding. One of my duties that is perhaps the most important is that of communicating...with the President, the other chairpersons, the Steering Panel, and the College population. The President receives monthly agendas and minutes of Steering Panel meetings, copies of proposals and any correspondence regarding them. I receive copies of minutes of subcommittee meetings and correspondence between chairs and proposers, if any. I occasionally write short items for the weeky staff newsletter, and once a year, during the membership solicitation, send a letter to all College employees telling them of current progress--sort of a "State of the CAS" address, if you will.

In addition, I work with our research office to conduct an annual evaluation, disseminate the results, and consult with the President about any changes that might be made.

In the Fall of the year, during our annual Staff Development Days, we hold a "thank you" occasion for outgoing and incoming committee members. In conjunction, an orientation is held for new members to acquaint them with their own specific duties and to give them an overview of the entire system, its purpose and how it interfaces with other College activities and structures.

Why has CAS worked for Metropolitan Community College, Omaha, Nebraska, and how can CAS work for you? Bobbi and I strongly believe that CAS's success lies in the following keys:

First, credibility. This is the most difficult to achieve. Without it the system is headed for failure. Credibility is not established overnight--it must be earned. Early committees must be hand selected and composed of respected members of the staff. The college population must see that the system works--that their proposals are reviewed and receive

a response, even if the response is "no." We believe CAS has achieved credibility as the number of proposals submitted to CAS has increased each year and we have more volunteers than necessary to fill the various committees with a diversified group of individuals. A sampling of proposals submitted, recommended, and implemented at Metro include: direct deposit of paycheck, student registration address update, retirement pre-planning seminars, periodic class lists showing student withdrawal dates, public safety officer compensation, designated smoking areas, and summer flex schedule.

A random sampling of staff regarding how they view CAS and its effectiveness show that they too feel CAS to be credible. Comments included:

> I had mixed emotions at first, thought it was futile. I submitted two proposals and "By gosh," I got results--CAS really works!
>
> I have gained more from being on a CAS committee than they have received from me serving. Think everyone should have the opportunity.
>
> It's a good way for staff and faculty to present an idea that you would like others to know about and its reviewed by a number of people.
>
> CAS does work--even if the answer is no, it is still an answer.
>
> I like the ease of submitting proposals--I can fill one out and send it in and not have to sit in front of someone and explain my idea.
>
> I like the fast feed-back.
>
> I have found it to be an interesting and rewarding experience to serve on CAS. I feel simple problems are readily addressed and implemented; however, I believe that the more complex issues get "bogged" down as more administrators become involved in implementation.

(Conway's Law transparency--See Appendix G) We determined that at least within and immediately surrounding CAS, we would not have one person who knew everything. This leads us to our second key to success--Communication. You have heard me talk a lot about this very thing already. My communication with the President. His communication with me. My communication with the various chairpersons. Their communication with me. Their communication with their committees. The communication with the College population. I can't stress this enough. In order for this system to work, people have to know what is going on...Inside as well as outside committee workings.

The final key to success is commitment. Without commitment the other two keys don't stand a chance. Commitment from everyone: the College President, whose support is essential; his/her cabinent, who move the proposals through their areas of responsibility; the committee chairpersons, who shoulder the bulk of the work, both paper and interpersonal; the committee members, who are giving of their time and effort for a volunteer organization, to work at improving their own work environment; and finally, the College population, who submit their valued ideas with the belief that <u>they</u> can make a difference. CREDIBILITY, COMMUNICATION, COMMITMENT -- These three keys have unlocked the door of success for us at Metro with this type of a governance system. For us, <u>CAS Works!</u>

APPENDIX

Transparency A -- Old and Kahn's Law

Transparency B -- Jay's First Law of Leadership

Transparency C -- CAS Proposal Form

Transparency D -- Rule of Defactualization

Transparency E -- Flow Chart

Transparency F -- Proposal Updates

Transparency G -- Conway's Law

OLD AND KAHN'S LAW:

THE EFFICIENCY OF A COMMITTEE MEETING IS INVERSELY PROPORTIONAL TO THE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS AND THE TIME SPENT ON DELIBERATIONS.

JAY'S FIRST LAW OF LEADERSHIP:

CHANGING THINGS IS CENTRAL TO LEADERSHIP, AND CHANGING THEM BEFORE ANYONE ELSE IS CREATIVENESS.

METROPOLITAN TECHNICAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

College Advisory System Proposal Form

Use this form to introduce a formal proposal into the College Advisory System (CAS).

This completed form goes to the CAS Steering Panel whose members will decide initially if the issue is one which should be handled through CAS channels or handled through regular administrative channels. If the proposal is to be handled through CAS channels, it will be forwarded to one of the CAS standing committees and then to the appropriate vice president.

If you have any questions, please contact a member of the CAS Steering Panel.

You will be informed about disposition of your proposal.

PROPOSAL:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

SUGGESTED SOLUTION:

SUPPORTING MATERIAL:

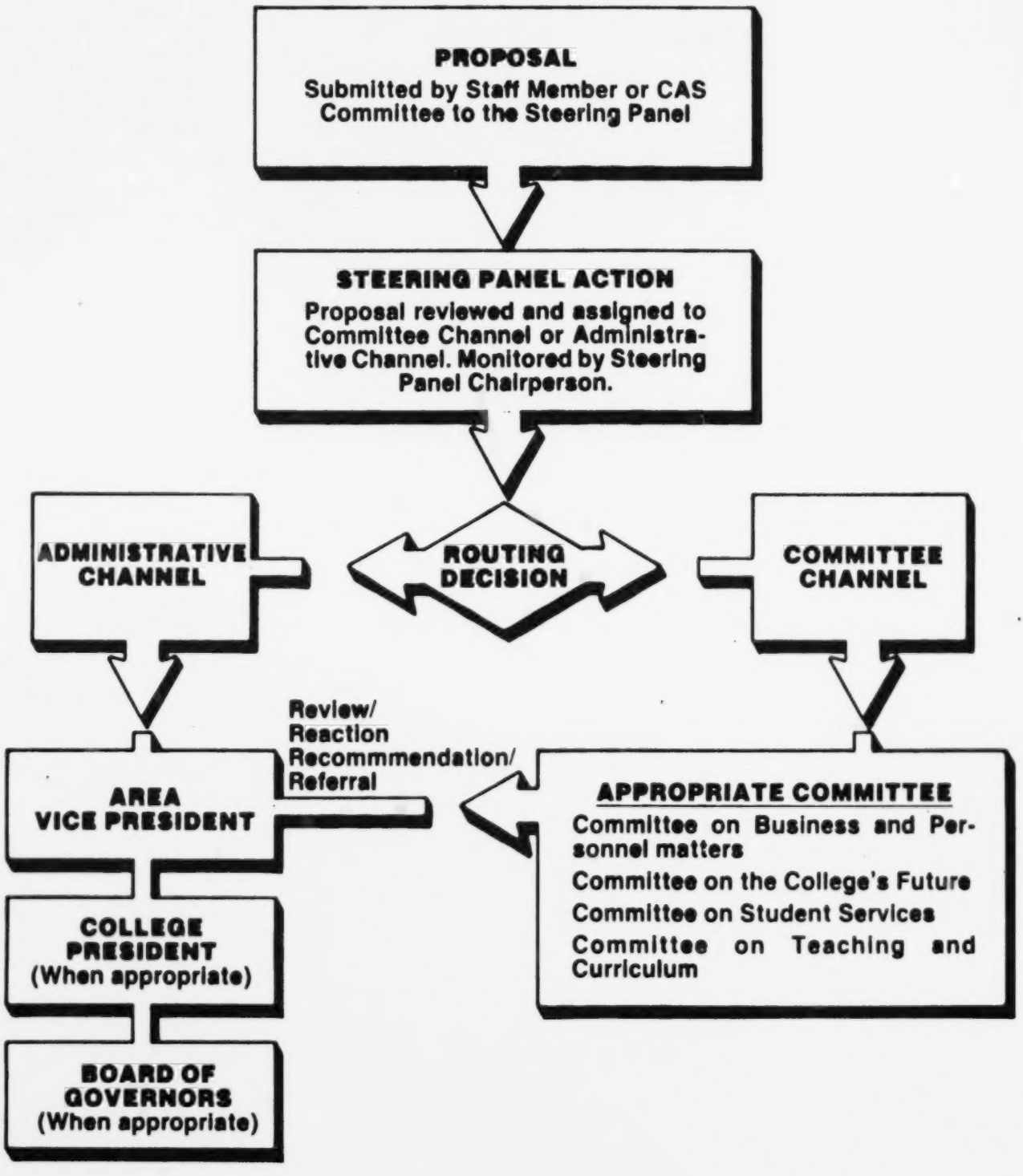
_____

Signature (optional) **Date**

RULE OF DEFACTUALIZATION:

INFORMATION DETERIORATES UPWARD THROUGH BUREAUCRACIES.

COLLEGE ADVISORY SYSTEM
Organization and Flow Action


PROPOSAL
Submitted by Staff Member or CAS Committee to the Steering Panel
STEERING PANEL ACTION
Proposal reviewed and assigned to Committee Channel or Administrative Channel. Monitored by Steering Panel Chairperson.
ADMINISTRATIVE CHANNEL
ROUTING DECISION
COMMITTEE CHANNEL
Review/ Reaction Recommmendation/ Referral
AREA VICE PRESIDENT
COLLEGE PRESIDENT (When appropriate)
BOARD OF GOVERNORS (When appropriate)
APPROPRIATE COMMITTEE
Committee on Business and Personnel matters
Committee on the College's Future
Committee on Student Services
Committee on Teaching and Curriculum

PROPOSAL UPDATES

PROPOSAL NO.	TITLE	PROPOSER	SENT TO	RESPONSE DUE TO StP	RESPONSE & DATE RECEIVED
FA-86-01	Employee Fitness Program	Wanda Stuck	B&PM	10/9/86	B&PM sent to Mr. Richard Bowman to determine the feasibility of such a program. Reply received 10/9/86. Mr. Rich Bowman cites the activities available to employees through the College's non-credit classes. The College's benefit program is already comprehensive and further costing against salaries may not be advisable.
FA-86-02	Drivers Education Program	Joyce Burrell	Dr. Ballantyne	9/18/86	9/2/86 - It was determined that the cost of the car, installation of special equipment, insurance and salaries outweighed the benefit to the College.
FA-86-03	Student Conduct Guidelines	Larry Lindberg	SS	10/9/86	SS received guidelines and provided the input requested by Mr. Lindberg. A copy of student conduct guidelines is available at the Counseling and Advising Centers on each campus.
FA-86-04	Entry-level Skills Assessment	Muriel Rada	T&C	10/9/86	10/29/86 - T&C forwarded the proposal to Dr. Mary Wise, Acting V.P. Educational Services with six (6) recomendations. 11/3/86 Dr. Wise responded to all recommendations. The entire area is under evaluation with a May, 1987 target date for the completion of the study.
FA-86-05	Graduate H.S. diploma/GED requirement	Muriel Rada	T&C SS	10/9/86	10/29/86 - T&C forwarded the proposal to Dr. Mary Wise. 11/3/86 - Dr. Wise has tasked Mr. Mel Waisanen with reporting back to Educational Services. No further response.
FA-86-06	Exhaust fans for restrooms in Bldg. 30	Anonymous	Mr. Baer	11/7/86	10/17/86 - Exhaust system currently exists within heating/cooling systems
FA-86-07	Screens for restrooms in Bldg. 30	Dorothy Elias	Mr. Baer	11/7/86	10/17/86 - Fire code regulations do not permit blocking of traffic way in this area.
FA-86-08	Historical Markers for buildings on Fort Omaha Campus	Phyllis Doughman	Dr. Beck	11/7/86	11/18/86 - It is possible that the Douglas County Historical Society can help the College with this project. The markers should be erected by the College, the Historical Society, or both.

*B & PM/Business & Personnel Mgmt. *CF/College's Future *SS/Student Services *StP/Steering Panel *T & C/Teaching & Curriculum

CONWAY'S LAW:

IN ANY ORGANIZATION THERE WILL ALWAYS BE ONE PERSON WHO KNOWS WHAT IS GOING ON.

THIS PERSON MUST BE FIRED.

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges MAR 18 1988